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ABSTRACT

Pervasive and persistent poverty has eroded but not destroyed the strong, deep, value framework that for so long sustained black people. These values--among them, family, education, and hard work--are so deeply held that they remain and can be explicitly tapped today. The black value system, together with the variety of historic and existing self-initiated activities for self-help and advancement can be the basis for a newly energized and expanded effort from within the black community to tackle a new variety of problems. But the disparities would never have arisen at all if official and societal discrimination had not denied blacks earlier access to equality and to opportunity. They can be eradicated only if the government comes to the assistance of a community in crisis. (AA)

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A POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

Black Initiative and Governmental Responsibility

Introduction by
John Hope Franklin and
Eleanor Holmes Norton

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An Essay by the Committee on Policy for Racial Justice
Published by the Joint Center for Political Studies

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Black Initiative and Governmental Responsibility

Introduction by
John Hope Franklin and
Eleanor Holmes Norton

Joint Center for Political Studies
Washington, D.C.
1987

The Joint Center for Political Studies is a national nonprofit institution that conducts research on public policy issues of special concern to black Americans and promotes informed and effective involvement of blacks in the governmental process. Founded in 1970, the Joint Center provides independent and nonpartisan analyses through research, publication, and outreach programs.

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THE COMMITTEE ON POLICY FOR RACIAL JUSTICE: MISSION AND OBJECTIVES

The Committee on Policy for Racial Justice is committed to independent intellectual inquiry in the search for solutions to problems confronting black Americans. In that search the committee members rely on the sage observations made by wise and courageous black spokesmen who have preceded them. One was Frederick Douglass, who said, more than a century ago, "If we are ever elevated, our elevation will have been accomplished through our own instrumentality. . . . No People that has solely depended upon [outside] . . . aid . . . ever stood forth in the attitude of Freedom."

Another was William E. B. Du Bois, who declared, more than a half century ago, that the progress and ultimate positive resolution of the struggle for racial justice in the United States would depend on the contributions of blacks themselves, who would use theirknowledge and skills—in economics, in social policy, in public administration, and in political theory and practice—as weapons in the ongoing struggle for social justice.

The third trenchant observation was made by a great modern leader, Martin Luther King, Jr., who said, "It is not a sign of weakness, but a sign of high maturity to rise to the level of self-criticism . . . [which means] critical thinking about ourselves as a people and the course we have charted or failed to chart during this period."

It is in this spirit that the committee meets periodically to review the condition of blacks in American society, to inform itself and others about progress and failures in the struggle for racial equality, and to seek to chart a course that will advance the cause of justice for all.

FOREWORD

In 1979 the Joint Center for Political Studies asked social psychologist Kenneth B. Clark and historian John Hope Franklin to prepare a statement that would set forth some of the major problems black Americans faced in the 1980s—"to sketch out a common experience in the vineyard of civil rights and to alert us to the unfinished tasks which lie ahead." The result was an essay entitled *The Nineteen Eighties: Prologue and Prospect*, which provided the impetus for a more extensive exploration of the subject by a group of prominent black scholars who met at Tarrytown, N.Y., in July 1981. This group, now called the Committee on Policy for Racial Justice and based at the Joint Center, has met on five occasions. Its first publication, *A Policy Framework for Racial Justice*, identified three areas of urgent concern for the black community: the economy, the black family, and education.

The second publication, presented here as *Policy Framework II: Black Initiative and Governmental Responsibility*, reflects many months of deliberation by the committee. It attempts to place our approach to the problems and circumstances confronting blacks in the context of the black community's values and traditions, its historic reliance on its own initiative, and its expectation of government. I believe that this essay succeeds in that effort and sets the framework for future exploration of specific subjects. In fact, the next essay in this series will develop our views on blacks in the American economy, and will be followed by an analysis of major educational problems viewed from a black perspective.

The Joint Center takes great pride in the work of the committee—its deliberations and publications. We firmly believe that the mission of the committee is closely attuned to our own: to identify and help resolve major social, economic, and political problems in our national life, and to bring timely, cogent, and often overlooked policy perspectives to the national consensus-building process.

Eddie N. Williams
December 1986

INTRODUCTION

This is the second in a series of occasional essays that seek a new departure in the discussion of issues facing black Americans. That effort, which began with *A Policy Framework for Racial Justice (Framework I)*, was spurred by an awesome and often perplexing array of new challenges and lingering problems facing black Americans and by changes in the terms of the debate about the black condition. *Framework I*, with its essays on "The Economy," "The Black Family," and "Education," encouraged reflection and comment on industrial policy, the black family, and illiteracy before those issues had achieved significant national recognition. The wide circulation and response that *Framework I* received within the black community and elsewhere confirmed our belief that there is a need for more penetrating analysis of the problems that impede racial justice in the United States.

In pursuit of this goal, and before turning to subsequent essays that will deal in depth with some of these problems, we have felt the necessity to address in *Framework II* three areas of concern that lie beneath much of the public discussion—and confusion—about black community directions today. Basic premises concerning these areas—black values, the role of the black community, and the role of government in addressing the problems of blacks—are too often assumed and too rarely articulated. The result is a frequently polarized debate that does not clarify the issues or advance understanding of useful new directions for the black community.

We believe that solutions to the problems facing black Americans require simultaneously three distinct areas of activity:

- that we draw more explicitly and openly upon the extraordinarily rich and vibrant tradition of black values that continues to sustain us;
- that we do more to mobilize and, in some instances, redirect the strong self-help tradition that is hard at work but too often hidden from public view; and
- that we lay out the much obscured case for government's responsibility for disadvantaged citizens in a stable democracy and indicate specific steps that government should take.

We believe that the one-sided emphases and single-minded approaches to black progress we often hear today are simplistic and utterly inadequate. Instead, here, we undertake to acknowledge and then work with the inescapable reality that blacks, whose progress has been artificially delayed by societal racism and official discrimination, must now find their way to equality in a far more troubled and rapidly changing context than other Americans faced. Given the depth of disadvantage that still besets the black community, only an adroit mix of strategies that complement one another can have any chance of success. We hope that this publication, like its predecessor, will help illuminate issues confronting black Americans and the society at large and will contribute to a renewed national and community commitment to find just and useful solutions.

John Hope Franklin
Eleanor Holmes Norton
December 1986

BLACK INITIATIVE AND GOVERNMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Black Americans have been at the helm of a profound social revolution. Since World War II, we have engineered the demise of a rigidly segregated society, used nonviolent action and litigation to compel the protection of basic rights, expanded the American society's conception and application of equality, made dramatic gains in political participation and leadership, and secured notable improvements in our socioeconomic status. Today, American society remains far from colorblind, and race continues to be a powerful predictor of status; but viewed against the backdrop of history, blacks and the entire society have made genuine progress.

It is precisely these achievements that make untenable the condition of the large part of the black population that remains enmeshed in a crisis of poverty. While only one-tenth of white Americans are poor today, more than one-third of blacks are trapped in poverty, many with only dim prospects for escape. No stable democracy can afford to ignore such disparities.

The condition of [the] large population of urban poor casts a shadow over the gains made by the rest of society and by blacks themselves.

Most of the black poor are concentrated in badly deteriorated inner cities, are poorly educated and without the skills and experience required in today's workplace, are plagued by extremely high rates of unemployment or underemployment, and are strained by a rapidly deteriorating family structure. Many of these poor blacks are part of what a number of analysts call an "urban underclass" that is increasingly isolated from the mainstream of society and its opportunities. The condition of this large population of urban poor casts a shadow over the gains made by the rest of society and by blacks themselves. This dilemma and appropriate responses to it are the concerns of this statement.

The causes of persistent urban black poverty are

uncommonly complex, but some of the contributing factors are abundantly clear. Sweeping economic and technological changes in recent years have substantially altered the character and distribution of urban and rural labor markets. Even more sweeping changes in the global economy have resulted in a decline in the relative competitiveness of major segments of the U.S. economy, especially in well-paying jobs of modest skill that typically have brought other Americans into the middle class. Jobs that were plentiful in core cities when whites were residents have dispersed to the suburbs and outlying areas. Inadequate education and skill levels and damaged self-esteem and aspiration have often undermined the chances of poor blacks to compete successfully in the labor market. Finally, the cumulative effects of the long history of discrimination have impaired the capacity of many of the more disadvantaged to cope with a complex, rapidly changing economy and society.

These conditions of poverty have been allowed to fester for so long and are so difficult to eradicate that they will require the most determined and resourceful efforts by all who are implicated.

These conditions of poverty have been allowed to fester for so long and are so difficult to eradicate that they will require the most determined and resourceful efforts by all who are implicated. The impacted network of economic and social problems is so novel and ferocious that it can be attacked effectively only by a judicious, concurrent, and sustained mix of *both* black self-help efforts *and* public and private assistance from the nation as a whole. Self-help can have only a limited impact on the economic environment, but it can encourage action and teach behavior that can pay handsome dividends for blacks and for the nation as a whole. However, the creation of a more robust economic environment and of greater equity in the distribution of its fruits is a public responsibility. Despite a vigorous continuing debate about the role of government in American life today, the mainstream American view remains that government should be an active agent for improving the quality of life of the people and for responding to community needs in times of crisis. Thus, even in the face of large budget cuts and huge deficits, farmers, children, veterans, immigrants, students, the elderly, small-business people, and others continue to be the focus of special attention and funding from government.

The crisis of the black community deserves no less attention.

The Black Community's Values as a Basis for Action

The conditions associated with the profound urban poverty among blacks—declining male labor-force participation, very high rates of out-of-wedlock births and female-headed households, a high level of welfare dependency, poor educational performance, and high crime rates—inevitably prompt questions about the character and role of values in the black community. These questions have been raised in an effort both to account for current conditions and to search for the critical ingredients of a possible solution.

Blacks have always embraced the central values of the society, augmented those values in response to the unique experiences of slavery and subordination, incorporated them into a strong religious tradition, and espoused them fervently and persistently. These values—among them, the primacy of family, the importance of education, and the necessity for individual enterprise and hard work—have been fundamental to black survival. These community values have been matched by a strong set of civic values, ironic in the face of racial discrimination—espousal of the rights and responsibilities of freedom, commitment to country, and adherence to the democratic creed. Indeed, the country's democratic values defined black America's expectations of the society and formed the basis of our struggle for equality.

The value traditions of the black heritage are especially relevant to the needs of black people during this period.

The value traditions of the black heritage are especially relevant to the needs of black people during this period. For example, commitment to the family historically has been one of the most powerful forces in black life. First as slaves, then as sharecroppers and farmers, and finally as urban workers, blacks always embraced a strong family

ethic as central to our lives, and the great majority managed to maintain strong, intact families often in the face of enormous adversity. Large numbers, separated from their families by slavery and the Civil War, went to extraordinary lengths to reestablish family ties after the war. Later the great migration from the South separated families; still family bonds remained strong, facilitating the continuing migration of other family members. Family responsibilities were often shared across the distance between relatives in the South and those in the North. In spite of the effects of slavery, discrimination, and poverty, 75 percent of black families included both parents as recently as 1960. Throughout, extended families have been especially widespread and crucial. The extended family system flourishes today in the black community, for many out of tradition, for others as a means of coping with special pressures and hardships. These are native traditions to be drawn upon as blacks seek to find their way back to their own strong sense of family purpose.

The "self-help" tradition is so embedded in the black heritage as to be virtually synonymous with it.

Similarly, the "self-help" tradition is so embedded in the black heritage as to be virtually synonymous with it. Self-initiated efforts without assistance from the larger society—indeed, often in spite of resistance from the society—have found expression throughout our history in this country. The tradition of building institutions and initiating efforts both to defend themselves and to advance within a hostile society has long been a hallmark of black American life. In the decades following the Civil War black Americans often donated the land, built the schools, and paid the teachers when city and county governments refused to provide schools for them. "Self-help" later was especially identified with the work of Booker T. Washington and other prominent black leaders, with black higher education, with the black church, and with the many black-led organizations that stressed the value of education, thrift, enterprise, and the dignity of labor. The National Business League, the Tuskegee Farmers Conference, and the National Association of Colored Women were early examples of such organizations. It is not without significance that the

motto of the National Association of Colored Women was "Lifting As We Climb." Self-help pamphlets addressed to migrants from the South during the 1920s exhorted them to work hard and maintain good work habits. "Get a Job," one St. Louis Urban League brochure enjoined, "get there on time, be regular, master it, dignify it, do better than the other man. . . ." At the same time the tradition of self-improvement found a different but equally profound expression in the philosophy of W. E. B. Du Bois, who believed that education was critical not only to black social and economic advancement but also to political freedom.

The historic link to the tradition of self-initiated efforts to improve the lives of blacks has never been broken. It is alive in thousands of efforts—from church adopt-a-child programs and housing developments to the large financial contributions black sororities and fraternities make to provide scholarships and advance community service activities. But greater leadership is needed both to mobilize and enhance these efforts and the values they represent. Moreover, we must reach more broadly and more deeply to levels of participation that include the poorest blacks and that draw them closer to blacks who have been more fortunate. Given the alienation and isolation of the very poor and the need in any case for resources from government, these are formidable challenges. But the condition of the poorest blacks makes these efforts a moral imperative for the black community.

We must reach more broadly and more deeply to levels of participation that include the poorest blacks and that draw them closer to blacks who have been more fortunate.

While all along pressing the larger society for equity and fairness, we have continually drawn upon our own resources in order to define ourselves positively and to renew our strengths. This has been true particularly at moments—as in the case of the current black experience—when complex new problems were suddenly added to older ones and when opposition appeared in powerful new forms. The most basic resource of the black community is the special value structure that has sustained black people through the darkest of hours. The leadership of the black community must more forcefully articulate, reaffirm, and reinforce

the black value heritage with renewed vigor and commitment as a basis for action today.

There are countless ways to do this. From our experience and history, black people have at hand an extraordinary store of values and traditions developed and honed through earlier battles that can be adapted to secure old gains as we fight up to higher ground. We can begin by encouraging all of the black community's religious institutions, civic and social organizations, media, entertainers, educators, athletes, public officials, and other community leaders to make special efforts to emphasize black community values as a central feature of their service to the black community.

The Community as Agent of Change

The black community always has been an agent for its own advancement. Action by government in addressing social and economic needs has been important, but it has been both recent and modest. Blacks made the transition from a largely impoverished mass of former slaves to a strong, vibrant community largely through individual effort and through the work of civil rights, cultural, fraternal, religious, social, professional, and service organizations in the black community. Thus, black Americans have an unusually rich history of self-initiated contributions to our own well-being. Indeed, without our own vigorous, creative, and persistent efforts, many of our needs would not have been met at all.

The black community always has been an agent for its own advancement.

In spite of this proud history, blacks are often skeptical of assessments of black community responsibility as compared with government's proper role—and no wonder. The history of black people is the history of countless unsuccessful efforts to get government to allow blacks the ordinary privileges of citizenship that were routinely a matter of right for whites. That history has been

characterized by a societal racial obsession replete with the most negative stereotypic attitudes that blamed blacks for problems that arose directly from oppressive and unequal treatment by the majority. As a result, blacks have a valiant history of protest and demands for equity from which we shall not retreat. But as so often in the past, black people and their leadership, armed with confidence from long years of struggle and angry at recent years of retreat, are also calling on the internal strengths of the community.

Recent salutary expansion of the government's role in assisting those in need has pushed to the background recognition of the black community's long history and continuing efforts of progress through self-reliance and has created misconceptions about historic and existing roles of community and of government in black socioeconomic advancement. Further, the very success of our civil rights movement in reducing many barriers to education, employment, housing, and economic opportunity has created a gap in socioeconomic status between those blacks who were in the best position to seize new opportunities and those who were not, facilitating physical and economic separation. This new diversity within the black community has sometimes altered community structures, dispersed leadership, and diminished the capacity for cohesive, effective initiatives.

Even so, community energy, whether through established institutions or local groups, must be a major force in the effort that will be necessary to address today's most pressing black problems. Throughout our history, blacks have relied on an unusual assortment of institutions and organizations to defend them, to provide services and opportunities denied them, and to advance their interests in a hostile environment. These black community institutions derive from the same heritage that has fostered black values. National civil rights organizations, national and local service, professional, religious, social, fraternal, and economic development organizations, and an array of functionally specialized national and local groups together constitute a potentially powerful base for

Community energy...must be a major force in the effort that will be necessary to address today's most pressing black problems.

mobilizing the talent and other resources of the black community to help meet the new problems of the black poor.

Black institutions have met the most extraordinary variety of community needs, and much of this tradition continues unheralded today. For example, black churches have not only ministered to black spiritual needs, values, and morale; they have also often met the temporal needs of their congregations and the larger community by such efforts as developing housing, operating day-care centers, and creating a rich variety of programs to meet community needs—from youth programs to senior citizen activities. Moreover, the black community has many service organizations that run programs to combat illiteracy, drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, truancy, delinquency, and other problems. Perhaps the best example of self-help activity today is the energetic and completely self-generated political activities of blacks—many denied the vote until recently—enthusiastically participating in the political process and electing blacks to office.

The successes of recent decades have produced new needs and a new set of problems which require us to broaden the base of our assets and to apply the wisdom of our history ever more ingeniously.

With so much history and continuing community activity to draw upon, how can black community resources and institutions be galvanized to better meet the new and intractable problems facing us? How do we both strengthen and expand black initiatives to help meet unprecedented challenges? To note that we have strengths on which to call and that our history is replete with examples of victorious struggle is not to minimize the tasks before us. Rather, the successes of recent decades have produced new needs and a new set of problems which require us to broaden the base of our assets and to apply the wisdom of our history ever more ingeniously. Many of these are new problems that grow out of the recent history of rapid urbanization, massive unemployment, and new, subtle forms of racial discrimination that have taken root in many communities.

Many existing institutions and organizations in the black community are themselves undergoing change as they try to recast themselves in response

to the new forces affecting blacks. Contradictory trends—improvement in race relations and in the socioeconomic status of many blacks and an array of complex new problems that face many others—have challenged the mission and mode of operation of black organizations. The very success of these organizations has created the need for a new agenda, which black organizations are debating and drawing up today. Similarly, the black church has had to contend with many competing forces and distractions that have made it difficult for the church to maintain its traditional reach and influence.

Yet the black community and its institutions are unusually resilient and resourceful. To assume a new command of its problems and facilitate more rapid advancement, the black community must strengthen its institutions, help them adjust to new circumstances and new challenges, increase its financial and participatory support, and encourage more purposeful communication and collaboration. Today, for example, one of the most urgent needs in black organizational life is to develop more effective bridges between the urban poor and the new black middle class outside the ghettos. Organizations at all levels, particularly locally based community organizations, need to address more vigorously the appropriate role and implementation of collaboration across class lines between blacks who enjoy some of the advantages of the society and those who do not.

The black community must take the lead in defining the new and the continuing problems it faces, in communicating the urgency of these problems, and in both prescribing and initiating solutions.

This challenge does not underestimate the indisputable necessity of government action in addressing both the new and the lingering social and economic needs of the black community. To maximize—indeed, often to make community efforts bear fruit at all—government must play a principal role in the process. The complexity and magnitude of the task requires a judicious combination of public and private efforts and resources. At the same time, some of the problems blacks face cannot effectively be handled by government alone, as blacks know best of all. Moreover, community efforts, which have always been critical to black advancement, will be especially important today

precisely because government has defaulted, failing altogether to act with the commitment or on the scale necessary to effect change. Blacks will never let government rest with its present posture of passivity and abdication. But as problems deepen, internal black community efforts must continue while we find ways to bring about the decent and committed governmental leadership we and the country deserve.

The black community must take the lead in defining the new and the continuing problems it faces, in communicating the urgency of these problems, and in both prescribing and initiating solutions. It must do so with at least the vigor and resourcefulness with which it pursued the civil rights revolution, when government was either passive or hostile, as it often is today. As was the case then, vigorous, enthusiastic black initiative is essential to spark a more creative and purposeful national effort.

The Government's Role in Meeting New Challenges

Many of the most pressing problems of the black community are well beyond its capacity or that of any single community to resolve.

The direction we have proposed for blacks is vital to their advancement. Standing alone, however, it cannot be fully effective. Many of the most pressing problems of the black community are well beyond its capacity or that of any single community to resolve. Blacks, for example, are found in grave disproportion among the structurally or permanently unemployed. Long-term unemployment resulting from the recession of 1981-82 increased among white males by 1.2 percentage points, but among black males by 7.7 percentage points. The numbers for females are comparably disproportionate: 0.5 percentage points for whites and 3.8 percentage points for blacks. The decline of the manufacturing sector has not only withdrawn the jobs of black men and women who have worked all their lives; it has also denied jobs to an entire generation of young blacks, 40% of whom are

unemployed. Neither blacks nor any other group can create jobs on the scale needed; nor can we restore the economy to include more jobs of moderate skill and decent pay that created the white middle class. This is preeminently the work of government. The black community cannot restore the deteriorated infrastructure of the cities that provides the physical framework for the ghetto and for ghetto conditions and attitudes. This too is the job of government. In addition, initiatives by the community, many already in progress, cannot be fully effective if completely unaided by government. The continuing problems blacks face will require firm, responsive, long-term commitment by government at every level, led by the federal government.

What we propose is a new framework for eradicating the growing disparities between blacks and whites.

In the past, the federal government has been responsible in many ways for policies that have brought important changes to the lives of blacks and other Americans. It reversed its historic position and moved to ensure basic civil rights and remove the most blatant racial discrimination. It acted more equivocally to alleviate severe poverty and expand economic opportunity. Since 1981 it has retreated on all fronts, deepening black problems, especially in employment, health, education, and family stability. Even in more vigorous periods, the actions of the government were belated and sometimes ambivalent. Thus, severe handicaps are still experienced by a large portion of the black community as a result of prolonged subordination that was government-sanctioned and of poverty from which most Americans have long been relieved.

What we propose is a new framework for eradicating the growing disparities between blacks and whites. We urge a concentrated effort by government to invest first in models and then in programs and strategies for human development that will facilitate economic independence and encourage the poor to take charge of their own lives. Programs can be drawn from the most successful government efforts, such as Head Start, that stress the prevention of poverty and other problems, and from new models, such as welfare programs that stress education, training, and work. These

strategies require the reassertion of strong federal leadership, especially in programs that must be federally focused if the problems of blacks are to be addressed adequately and if blacks in every location are to be reached.

Specific examples of necessary programmatic initiatives abound. We indicate only a few:

- Redesign the basic program of assistance for poor families with dependent children (AFDC) to encourage the maintenance of intact families and transform the current welfare maintenance approach to one of training, education, employment assistance, and employment. Adequate support services (such as high quality child care) should be included to enable the needy to take advantage of such opportunities. There already exist a number of models that show considerable promise in assisting the welfare poor toward self-sufficiency. The Massachusetts "ET Choices" program is perhaps the most prominent example, but other states and localities are moving in similar directions that could inform a new federal effort. Despite its statutory responsibilities, the federal government has failed to assume the indispensable leadership role required for this federal program and urgently needs to do so if a modernized and coherent approach to welfare is to develop quickly.
- Replicate successful models that join the federal government and state governments with private employers, unions, and universities in an effort to retrain the rapidly rising number of permanently unemployed Americans, among whom are an alarming number of black men. The nation is already tardy in addressing the problems of structural unemployment that are lowering the overall American standard of living and decimating American manufacturing workers in general and black workers in particular.
- Create a comprehensive child development program, drawing on the notably successful Head Start program and state and local preschool

We urge a concentrated effort by government to invest first in models and then in programs and strategies for human development that will facilitate economic independence and encourage the poor to take charge of their own lives.

programs, to ensure disadvantaged children an early start toward educational achievement. The record of the past two decades with Head Start provides a promising basis for action that improves the life chances of children and is cost-effective. Prenatal and early childhood health care, as well as educational initiatives that focus upon young children are strategies that can avoid, by way of relatively modest expenditures now, social conditions that may be extremely costly, if not impossible, to rectify later.

- Create a comprehensive youth training and employment program aimed at skill development and school-to-work transition management. Such an enterprise should be closely linked to public schools, use multiple strategies drawn from the most successful public, private, and public-private partnership programs, and maintain the flexibility to respond to changing labor-market conditions. Considering the current high dropout and unemployment rates among black youth and dramatic changes in the economy, this action is urgently needed if the next generation of blacks is to be saved from obsolescence in a technologically sophisticated age.
- Expand and modify, where necessary, federal aid to education programs, with emphasis on quality education at the elementary and middle school level. Innovative strategies must also be developed for increasing retention levels in high schools and for closing the gap between the performance levels of disadvantaged youth and those of the school-aged population as a whole.
- Strengthen enforcement of antidiscrimination laws to ensure genuinely equal access to all benefits, services, and opportunities in the society. The bipartisan record of the government in the 1960s and 1970s provides ample evidence of the effectiveness of government in ensuring equality under law. Strong enforcement in the antidiscrimination effort has been

Many fruitful strategies are already in place and should be expanded: political participation, . . . litigation, . . . building coalitions across racial lines, . . . nonviolent direct action.

deliberately abandoned. It urgently needs to be resumed. It is a vital key to the development of a stable and economically independent black community.

It is much easier to outline these strategies than it is to propose ways of ensuring their implementation. In some states and communities, government has already begun to address these issues. Far-sighted leaders and large segments of the public have come to understand that creating and extending a productive economy means including everyone. However, many Americans, including national leaders, indicate an unwillingness to understand as a matter of either governmental responsibility or simple self-interest the necessity for attending to the problems of the black poor.

Many fruitful strategies are already in place and should be expanded. Political participation in local, state, and national elections is one way to increase the ability of blacks to focus public debate upon the necessity for governmental action. Litigation directed at establishing legal rights to an adequate education for our children benefits the black community and the nation. Building coalitions across racial lines broadens the commitment to national problems such as unemployment, underemployment, and poverty. Nonviolent direct action raises the consciousness of the public about the necessity for governmental action to accomplish goals only government can address, among them building a strong economy and vigorously enforcing civil rights laws. None of this will be easy, but assuring governmental assumption of its rightful role is essential.

Pervasive and persistent poverty has eroded but not destroyed the strong, deep, value framework that for so long has sustained black people.

Conclusion

Pervasive and persistent poverty has eroded but not destroyed the strong, deep, value framework that for so long has sustained black people. These values—among them, family, education, and hard work—are so deeply held that they remain and can

be explicitly tapped today. The black value system, together with the wonderful variety of historic and existing self-initiated activities, can be the basis for a newly energized and expanded effort from within the black community to tackle a new variety of unusually resistant social and economic problems. But the inexcusable disparities between whites and blacks that continue today were not created by blacks, and they cannot be addressed by blacks alone. These disparities would never have arisen at all if official and societal discrimination had not denied blacks earlier access to equality and to opportunity. They can be eradicated only if the government assumes its appropriate role in a democratic, humane, and stable society—its role of coming to the assistance of a community in crisis.

The inexcusable disparities between whites and blacks . . . can be eradicated only if the government assumes its appropriate role in a democratic, humane, and stable society.

THE COMMITTEE ON POLICY FOR RACIAL JUSTICE: MEMBERS

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